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There is strong evidence which shows many communities have failed to plan adequately or even plan for long range school construction needs. This paper deplores this failure and gives some recommendations for long range planning. A checklist is described which may serve as a guide for conducting a school plant survey to identify and survey unmet educational needs, establish priorities, and provide for corrective action. Revisions and adjustments are stated to be a continual process. Community specifics can be studied, community planners coordinated, long range plans for school site acquisitions developed, and long range construction and operating budgets adopted. (NI)

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SCHOOL COSTS ARE RISING AND MASSACHUSETTS VITALLY NEEDS LONG-RANGE PLANNING FOR SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

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Evidence from a number of conferences on school building needs with cities and towns indicates that communities have failed to plan, have delayed long-range planning, have yielded to the greatest pressure exerted at the time, have pacified developers of new housing subdivisions, or relied on older methods of thinking that enrollment increases would somehow disappear or go away. Procrastination has been a most wasteful drain on tax funds because it permitted inflation to take away educational spaces and tax dollars without providing any returns for investments. A sound long-range plan would not only offer protection for a school committee, but would minimally have given a community an orderly coordinated plan for school construction to achieve a suitable, effective educational program at the least cost to the taxpayers. In brief, the following outline guide may be useful.

OUTLINE GUIDE FOR SCHOOL PLANT STUDY

The following checklists may be utilized as an outline guide for conducting a school plant study. These lists are not all inclusive and should be modified to serve local community problems.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM CHECKLIST

1. What happens to our high school graduates?
2. How many students drop out of our schools?
3. What is the most desirable school organization for our school district? (K-6, 3, 3, or K-8, 9-12, etc.)
4. How many children should be in each class?
5. To what extent will the community use our schools?
6. What is the existing elementary school program?
7. What is the desired elementary school program?
8. What existing programs and desired improvements are needed for the education of all ages?

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SCHOOL ENROLLMENT CHECKLIST

1. Where do the children live (spot maps)
2. How many parochial and private school pupils (by school and grade) are there?
3. What is the history of birth rates? (school census cards)
4. What is the estimate of future enrollments?

SCHOOL PLANT CHECKLIST

1. How adequate is School "A"?
   a. age
   b. size of site
   c. facilities (floor plans)
   d. educational adequacy (rating form)
   e. structural adequacy (rating form)
   f. pupil capacity
   g. pupil utilization
   h. estimated enrollment
2. What is the total capacity of all school buildings?
3. What is the total utilization of all school buildings?
4. What modernization is needed?

COMMUNITY CHECKLIST

1. What are the characteristics of the existing population? (census data)
2. What is the existing zoning? (zoning map)
3. Is there a master plan for developing our community?
4. How much land is available for residential development?
5. What is the estimated future population?

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

1. What new facilities are needed?
2. What are the recommended steps in the proposed building program?
3. How much will it cost?
4. How will it effect our tax rates?

The following few paragraphs provide more detail than the brief outline of questions listed above.

Begin with the Educational Program

Long-range plans, if they are updated periodically, will save taxpayers in cities and towns millions of dollars. Time and delays in 1968 and the future cost money and short-change the education of our children. Long-range plans should begin with:

* Continuous development of written educational programs
* Acquisition of desirable sites well in advance of needs

* Adjustments to increasing or decreasing enrollments in various parts of the districts
* Elimination of obsolescent structures
* Comprehensive financial plans based on resources of the community and state

To determine long-range plans in any community requires a thorough analysis of the educational programs offered in the schools. School officials and teachers should be active participants in developing educational plans. The educational program should be completely articulated from kindergarten through grade 12. Qualitative educational programs and good architecture depend upon useful and functional facilities. Honest and careful appraisal of educational programs pre-determine whether school facilities may be wisely constructed. Continually school building committees ask how to access educational programs. To begin a survey of long-range planning, it is best to survey unmet needs with the leadership and assistance of the school superintendent, principals, teachers, parents, and other interested citizens. These needs include not only the educational needs, but also the social needs, statutorial or legal needs, business and other community needs. Secondly, it is important in today's competitive world to establish priorities following the summation of needs. There are certain social necessities and economic values which are more important than others. Certainly, we cannot purchase "the ideal", since man can think far beyond his pocketbook. Third, we need action; action to implement the most pressing priorities. Fourth, long-range plans require continuous revision and adjustment.

If plans cannot be revised and reassessed continuously then by all means annual reviews must be scheduled. Surveys of community characteristics, the educational program, and the facilities in the community should be consistently a part of every annual agenda for

school committees. There is tragic evidence in many communities throughout the country and in Massachusetts which shows the results of failure to provide long-range school building plans. There are numerable hodgepodge structures with addition after addition sprawling over every inch of school land that make the school look like a hand with two or three thumbs. Wise planning should have prevented short-term solutions for long-range problems in most cities and towns.

Study Community Specifics

In studying the community, the following area should be studied:

1. The geographic setting of the community
2. The general population, including the number, the distribution, and density of population.
3. The various occupational and educational levels in the community.
4. The economic base, which includes the products, the manufacturing companies, distributive enterprises, public utilities, and other types of industries and professional services in the community.
5. The basic legal and social structure including, the local government, public health, safety, welfare, religious organizations, and cultural activities such as museums, art collections, or other public exhibits.

Community facilities are an important part of the comprehensive necessities which determine the long-range plans for school facilities. Information may be obtained from local newspapers, professional organizations, charitable organizations, youth organizations, and educational organizations. Recreational facilities or the lack of parks, zoos, stadia, libraries, etc., are a vital part to wise planning. Transportation arteries, highways, and other road ways are important factors in this phase of the survey. Finally, the most

important factor of the community is the financial condition of the community. Indicators of wealth may be obtained from the statistics compiled by the various government agencies and might include: total assessed valuation with estimated percentage of true market value, postal receipts, sales receipts, per capita income, public and private indebtedness, tax rates, levies for public services, and the amount of delinquent taxes.

Coordinate Essential Community Planners

A good long-range school building program can only evolve after school and municipal officials assemble a broad array of facts and figures to substantiate the need and the direction for community action. A modern survey of school building needs should provide a general overall pattern for constructing school facilities. There are always alternative solutions.

Any survey to determine building needs must coordinate school needs and plans with the comprehensive master plans of the local planning board, or with the local agency issuing building permits. A survey of school needs may be conducted by professional or expert surveyors from outside the community or be developed by the educational staff and citizens of the local community when school districts have an adequate staff. In addition to the choices above, there are various combinations of local staff and consultant assistance which can be obtained to provide adequate and functional school facilities as part of the comprehensive and sound long-range plans of a community. Long-range planning begins with the characteristics of the community. Each community and all its varied aspects are the foundation upon which long-range plans must be built.

In recent years, the local municipalities have contributed

significant information and demographic materials for future school plans. Planning for physical development of the community has been given great impetus by recent federal redevelopment acts and the program for model cities. Too often, however, municipal planners have failed to communicate with school officials. School building committees have been equally remiss and failed to utilize valuable community information. Plans for redevelopment and model cities usually include, economic, demographic, social, cultural, physical, and financial data for a comprehensive city plan. These plans are usually prepared by planning specialists. In brief, their plans may be defined as an organization of local policy, which includes all the necessary preparations and work needed to advise a politically responsible authority to take rational and consistent action on all the major aspects in the proposed development areas. Long-range planning should also be defined from an educational point of view to make certain that the process of preparation , culminating in decisions on education will be included in the comprehensive city plans that will be the basis for actions affecting the schools. The determination of educational plans must precede the architectural plans in the design of school facilities. Educational planning need no longer be considered in the abstract as waiting for some bright idea to appear on the new horizon. Long-range planning programs have already made substantial contributions to American life by improving patterns of development, by making better use of public investments, and generally by rising the level of rational decision making.

Correct the Deficits in Education

Shocking deficits that long-range planning should correct, are public inconvenience, crowded classes, unsuitable and consequently

unsatisfactory facilities, expensive drains on educational programs and opportunities for children and youth, and low conomic and financial support of public facilities. Critics cannot overestimate the value of sound long-range planning. This is particularly true in communities where there are expanding enrollments. Children pay the price when forced to use poor inadequate and crowded facilities and perhaps of paramount importance pay for the rest of their lives when a teacher's time must be shared with so many others that he begins to feel neglected or that he is imposing on his teacher's time and drops out of school.

Long-range plans will insure maximum assessibility of schools consistant with good planning of the total community. Farsighted planning will provide adequate playgrounds and open spaces in the total community program. From the financial point of view, a long-range school building program is recommended for encouraging sound budgeting practices and financial planning to coordinate the general operating costs of education with building and maintenance expenditures. The need for hurried last-minute campaigning to secure financial support for school construction is minimized if not eliminated. It is quite obvious that farsighted land acquisitions for schools will provide substantial economical benefits to the community as a whole.

Estimate as Best as You Can; but Revise Predictions Annually

Sometimes the question is raised concerning the accuracy of predictions regarding growth areas in the community. What errors in respect to directions and nature of the community growth may be made? They are less likely to occur when the local people participate in the long-range planning. Purchases of land for school sites in advance of need has obvious financial benefits when sites prove to be needed.

Financial gains from wise investments in school sites will be many times greater than any loss which may be incurred from selling a few unused sites.

A proposed school site in itself is an incentive for residential development. The problems of maintenance are somewhat simplified by the knowledge that certain buildings are scheduled for remodeling, others for expansion, and still others for replacement. For example, if the heating system of the building scheduled for expansion requires replacement, then a new heating unit large enough to serve the expanded building could be installed. A number of economies in maintenance may be achieved by keeping the repairs and improvements at a minimum in a building scheduled for replacement. The money thus saved can be used more profitably on buildings that have a much longer life expectancy. Finally, a long-range school building plan provides the yardstick by which a school committee in a community can measure progress toward school goals. Thus, the program can serve as a guide for the appraisal of the school committee and the community as a whole in meeting its educational responsibilities.

By all means and in all ways let us plan to reduce costs for the long-range needs of education and the taxpayers in cities and towns by avoiding short-term solutions to long-term problems and by including school officials as team members on planning committees for redevelopment and model cities.